Random notes from //build/ 2011

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Here are some random notes from //build/ 2011, information of no consequence whatesoever.

- A game we played while walking to and from the convention center was *spot the geek*. "Hey, there's a guy walking down the street. He's wearing a collared shirt and khakis, with a black bag over his shoulder, staring into his phone. I call geek."
- One of the stores on Harbor Boulevard has the direct-and-to-the-point name Brand Name Mart, or as it was known at night (due to burnt-out lights) *Bra d N   Mart*.
- In the room where the prototype devices were being handed out to attendees, the boxes were stacked in groups. Each group consisted of 512 devices. Why 512? Because the boxes were stack 8 across, 8 high, and 8 wide. Somebody was being *way too cute*.
- Nearly all the machines were handed out in the first 55 minutes of availability. During that time, they were distributed at a rate of *one machine per second*. Kudos to the event staff for managing the enormous onslaught! Also, kudos to my colleagues who flew down a week early for the thankless task of preparing 5,000 computers to be handed out!
- In the way, way back of the Expo room were a bunch of makeshift private meeting rooms for the various vendors. As you can see from the picture, it was a depressing hallway of what looked like sensory deprivation chambers or interrogation rooms from *1984*. All that was missing was the screaming. Upon seeing the photo, one of my friends remarked, "Mental institutions look more cheerful than this," and she should know: She's a professional nurse.
- The setup at our demo booth consisted of a table with a touch monitor, with the image duplicated onto a wall-mounted display for better visibility. More than once, somebody would walk up to the wall-mounted display and try touching it. The game I played was to surreptitiously manipulate the touch monitor to match what the person was doing on the wall-mounted display, and see how long before they figure out that somebody was messing with them. (It didn't take long.)

- Two of my colleagues played an even more elaborate trick. One of them stood about ten feet from the wall-mounted display and waved his arms as if he were using a Kinect. The other matched his colleague's actions on the touch monitor. So if you see a media report about seeing a Kinect-enabled Windows 8 machine at the //build/ conference, you'll know that they were pranked.
- John Sheehan stopped by our booth, and around his neck were so many access passes he could've played solitaire. Security was tight, as you might expect, and any time he needed to go backstage, the security guard would ask to see his pass. "I'd just hold up all of them, saying 'Go ahead, pick one. Whatever pass you're looking for, it's in here somewhere.'"
- One of my colleagues stopped by our booth, and I made some remark about the backstage passes around her neck. She replied, "You so *don't* want a backstage pass. Because if you have one, it means that you will be working on three hours' sleep for days on end."
- Instead of "Hello, world," I think Aleš should have acknowledged that the programming landscape have changed, and the standard first application to write for a new platform is now a fart app. Wouldn't that have been an awesome app to have written on stage at the keynote?
- You may have noticed that everybody was wearing a white or green T-shirt under their //build/ conference uniform. When we arrived, each staff member was issued two uniform shirts, plus four undershirts. And for people who didn't understand what that meant, there were instructions to wear a different undershirt each day. (The engineer would optimize the solution to two uniform shirts and only *two* undershirts, with instructions to wear undershirts the first two days and skip them on the last two days.)
- Ever since PDC sessions started being put online, attending sessions has tended to take a back seat to business networking as a primary goal for coming to the conference, since you can always catch up on sessions later. As a result, the Expo floor tended to remain busy even when breakout sessions were taking place. Also, the last day of the conference tended to be a bit dead, with a lot of people leaving early, and the remaining people just taking it easy. But this year was different: People actually went to the breakout sessions! And despite being held on the final day of the conference, Matt Merry's session was not only well-attended, it overflowed.

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